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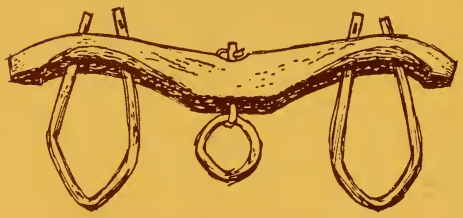

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WITH CHARITY FOR ALL

Courtesy Chicago Historical Society

The Statue of Abraham Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial at Washington, D.C.

With Charity for All

HIGHLIGHTS OF ABE LINCOLN'S LIFE IN VERSE

by

Ivan F. Bixby

Along With Some of Lincoln's Addresses and Letters

PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED

An Exposition — Banner Book

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Acknowledgments

For the facts presented in this book I am indebted to many noted Lincoln historians, among whom some were actually acquainted with the Great Emancipator.

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Permission by Harcourt, Brace and World, Incorporated, of New York, N. Y., in allowing me to quote from Carl Sandburg's *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years,* Vol. I and II, is gratefully acknowledged.

Finally, to those librarians and loyal friends who have aided me in the collecting of Lincoln lore from which these verses have been written, I say "thank you" with all my heart. A special word of thanks goes to Ruby E. Granger for her untiring effort and invaluable assistance throughout this entire endeavor.

I. F. B.

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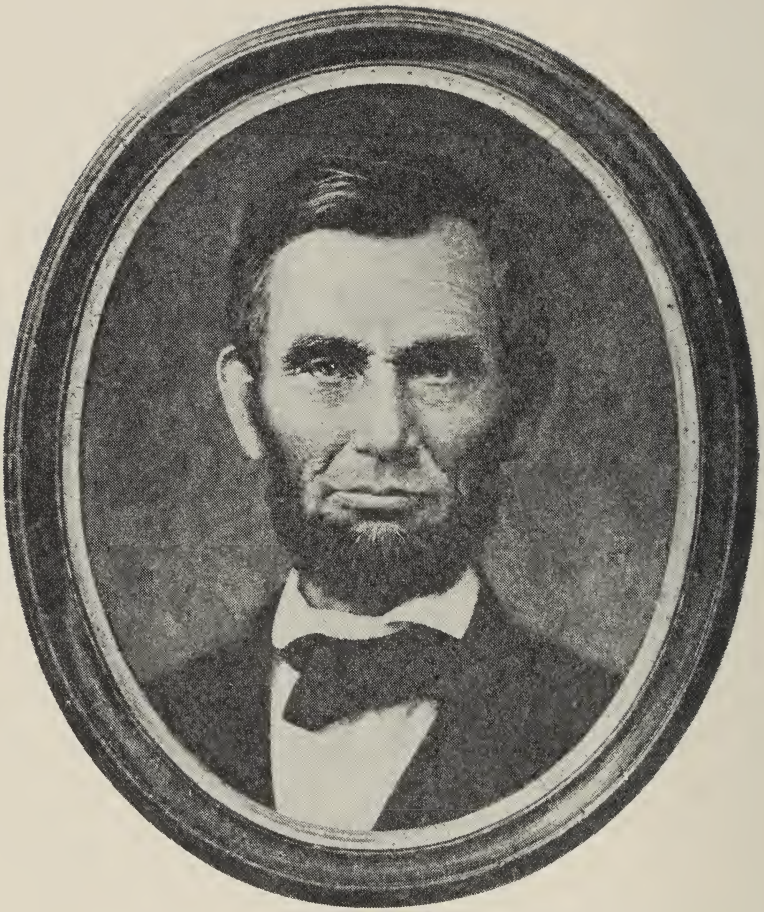


Courtesy the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Portrait of Lincoln by Birney Lettick

Introduction

In the literary field Abraham Lincoln gave poetry a high priority. This interest was already apparent in boyhood when, at the age of fourteen, he wrote in his school copybook (with some disregard for capital letters):

> Abraham Lincoln his hand and pen.
> he will be good but god knows When.

Incidentally, his goodness was largely unappreciated by men of his time. Generally hated throughout the South and ridiculed by many in the North, he nevertheless carried on "in the right" as God gave him "to see the right."

During the present Civil War Centennial commemoration, we can now look back to those perilous days from our vantage point of a century and see how good Abraham Lincoln truly was. Through his leadership the Union was preserved, and the issue of slavery which threatened its destruction was abolished. As a result, our nation has advanced until it now enjoys a standard of living and a position of strength comparable to none.

Apropos of Lincoln's love of poetry, in a letter to William Johnson dated 1846 he said of the great poem "Mortality" by William Knox: "I would give all I am worth and go in debt to be able to write so fine a piece as I think this is." Aside from "The Bear Hunt," which has twenty-two stanzas, and a few lesser-known compositions, Lincoln did not write many actual poems, but the cadence and rhetoric in his speeches and writings have a poetic quality of unalloyed beauty, reflecting his very nature.

In keeping with these thoughts, this book has been written as a new approach to an old subject dear to the hearts of us all.

Ivan F. Bixby

PART ONE

With Charity for All

Courtesy the Lincoln National Life Foundatio

Lincoln's Birthplace Near Hodgenville, Kentucky

I

Boyhood in Kentucky and Indiana

Seven score and thirteen years ago—
February twelfth on a Sunday morn—
In a Kentucky cabin, dirt floor and low,
Abraham Lincoln was born.
Three miles south of what's now Hodgenville,
Larue County, near Nolin Creek,
Marks the birthplace of one destined to fill
A role gloriously unique.

Dennis Hanks* said with a critical eye
While viewing the babe in his clutch,
"Its skin looks just like cherry pulp squeezed dry . . ."
Adding, "He'll never come to much."

Thomas and Nancy, Abe's father and mother
Had a family of three:
Sarah, Abraham, and one other
Who died in infancy.
Childbirth claimed Sarah at twenty-one,
Being Aaron Grigsby's wife,
While little Thomas, the younger son
Had less than three months of life.

*Dennis was ten years of age and Abe's first cousin.

Courtesy the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Country Scene in Kentucky

The Lincoln family was very poor
    Yet eked out a living somehow;
The privation which they had to endure
    Seems almost incredible now.
Mere survival was a constant fight
    For those along the frontier;
Hazards and hardships from morn 'til night
    Confronted the pioneer.

Like the others, Tom was a diligent man
    But never got very far;
His wagon, compared to the rest of his clan,
    Was hitched to a rather low star.
With two different farms he'd been unlucky:
    The deeds proved to be undermined;
For during those early days in Kentucky
    Land titles were poorly defined.

In eighteen-sixteen the news got about
    That Indiana land could be bought
For two dollars an acre. Hence the Lincolns set out,
    Hoping to better their lot.

Courtesy the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Lincoln's Home at Pigeon Creek, Indiana

On horseback, they made slow progress
    Moving to their new site
Through a vast uncharted wilderness,
    Where wildlings closed in at night.
Abe wrote, "When first my father settled here,
    'Twas then the frontier line;
The panther screams filled night with fear
    And bears preyed on the swine."

During that first winter they almost died
    As they lived in a half-faced camp,
With a roaring fire on the open side
    To hold back the cold and the damp.
But their larder was filled with salt pork and corn,
    The woods abounded in game;
And while they were all pretty forlorn,
    They cheered when the first robins came.

A new cabin was built as the weather cleared,
    Which measured eighteen feet square;
The logs were well chinked and the structure appeared
    As good as any out there.

Courtesy the Lincoln National Life Foundation

The Grave of Nancy Hanks Lincoln

Late in the summer of the following year,
Due to a lack of rainfall,
A plague swept through the Indiana frontier,
Striking fear in the hearts of all.
From cows that had eaten white snakeroot
An illness called "milksick" prevailed.
Doctors were scarce, the infection acute,
And trusted herb teas sadly failed.

The sickness was marked by pain and malaise,
And the weaker ones didn't survive;
Stricken, Mrs. Lincoln lived just seven days
And died at age thirty-five.

This religious and hard-working mother
Just before she passed on
Told the children to be kind to each other,
And, breathing a prayer, she was gone.
Sarah was eleven and Abe was nine
When torn from their mother's breast;
In a rough-hewn coffin Tom made from green pine
Nancy Lincoln was laid to rest.

Courtesy Chicago Historical Society

Sarah Bush Lincoln

Tom needed a wife, and next year he wed,
Bringing to the cabin another—
Sarah Bush Johnston—of whom Abe later said:
"She was truly my angel mother."

She was a widow with three mouths to feed,
Elizabeth, Matilda and John;
Maintaining her home had been hard indeed
As all of her money was gone.
Tom paid up her debts, borrowed wagon and team
And moved her family out there
To his humble home, where sadness supreme
Vanished with her loving care.

With a gourd of soft soap and hot water
She soon had his kids neat and clean,
Treating them as her own son and daughter
With no partiality seen.
She whitewashed the walls, helped lay a plank floor,
And with furniture which she'd acquired,
She transformed that cabin from a place to abhor
To one that was greatly admired.

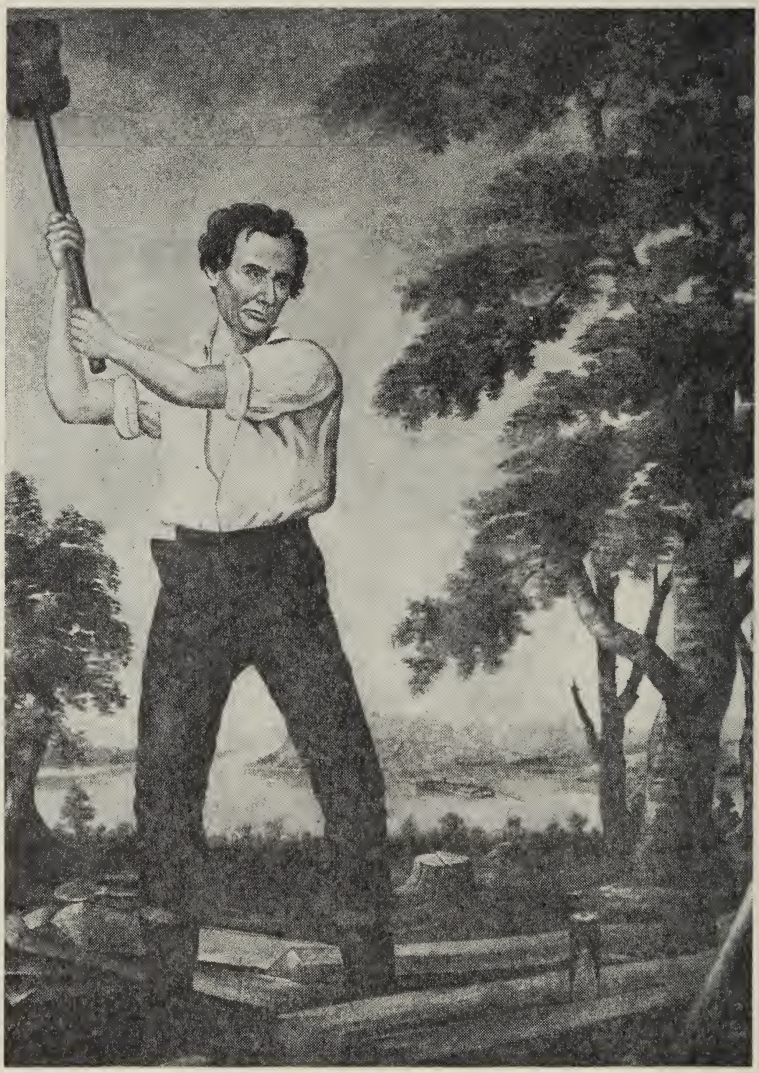
Courtesy the Lincoln National Life Foundation

The "Blab" School in Indiana
(Painting by Raymond Warren)

All of the children were sent to "blab" school,
    Where the pupils studied aloud;
Abe was the brightest, ciphered to the third rule,
    And the strongest one in the crowd.

One day they were having a spelling bee,
    The contestant couldn't decide
If the word should be spelled with an "i" or an "e,"
    And she was fit to be tied;
Abe and she were the last on their feet,
    And seeing a tear in her eye,
He pointed to his own with a gesture discreet,
    Letting the victory go by.

'Twas a little deed by a little lad,
    But it showed a big heart even then;
He couldn't bear to see another one sad
    Though the winner he would have been.
His formal schooling was less than one year,
    But he later held three degrees:
Columbia, Princeton and Knox acclaimed his career
    By conferring on him LL.D.'s.



Courtesy Chicago Historical Society

The Rail Splitter

Abe grew to manhood on the Pigeon Creek farm,
    Reaching full height: six feet four.
He was limber and lean, with a powerful arm,
    Which could sink an axe to the core.
He could grasp one by the end of its handle
    And hold it straight out at arm's length;
No lad around there could hold a candle
    To his remarkable strength.

His father and he cleared many an acre,
    Splitting the rails for each fence;
This arduous task was a real backbreaker,
    For the trees were rugged and dense.

Fourteen lean years on this land were spent,
    While Abe grew strong and tall;
Then on to Illinois they went
    As they heeded the westward call.
Here we will leave his family,
    Since he has become of age,
And follow the course of the destiny
    Of this mighty statesman and sage.

Courtesy the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Denton Offut's Store at New Salem, Illinois

II

Young Lincoln at New Salem, Illinois

On the Sangamon River to New Salem Abe came,
Being in search of some work;
A would-be storekeeper, Denton Offut by name,
Coaxed him to come on as his clerk.
This enterprise was not a success,
As temperance wasn't in Offut's creed;
But Abe felt confident nevertheless
With another man he could succeed.

Thus, when he returned from the Black Hawk War,*
He bought Rowen Herndon's share
Of the Herndon & Berry General Store
And went into business there.
To Berry, liquor was an absolute must
And he drank up most of the profit;
Lincoln discovered to his disgust
He was worse off there than with Offut.
His partner died in about three years
With the firm eleven hundred in debt;
It took Abe a decade to pay these arrears,
But in time he had every one met.

---

*Lincoln served three enlistments totaling eighty days during the Black Hawk War. He was made captain of his company comprising twenty-four men, but experienced no actual combat against Chief Black Hawk and his marauding band of Sauk and Fox Indians.

Photo by Betty Hulett
Courtesy Chicago Historical Society

New Salem, Illinois, in 1952

Abe's first political venture
    Was for an Assembly seat
In the Illinois Legislature;
    It ended in defeat.
While he waged an impressive fight,
    He was only twenty-three,
And the Reverend Peter Cartwright
    Was far better known than he.

Though he lost to this circuit pastor,
    He gained in another way;
He was appointed postmaster
    At New Salem the following May.

The job was a minor position,
    And the pay was small indeed,
But it gave him some recognition
    And two newspapers to read.
With each piece of mail he figured the fee,
    Taking mail around on his tramps;
The charge was paid by the addressee,
    For in those days they didn't have stamps.

Courtesy Chicago Historical Society

The Lincoln & Berry Store at New Salem, Illinois

A pioneer family traveling west
Stopped at the store of Lincoln & Berry;
Their wagon was loaded with all they possessed,
Including a barrel too bulky to carry.
The driver talked Abe into buying the barrel,
Which they had used as a trunk;
He said that it held some excess apparel
And a vast assortment of junk.

Abe set it away in the rear of the store
And for weeks gave it no thought;
Then one day he dumped the contents on the floor
To see what half-a-dollar had bought.
From the bottom a number of books tumbled out,
He couldn't believe what he saw;
In looking them over, he let out a shout:
One was Blackstone's work on English law!*

This book proved to be a motivating force
To Lincoln, an avid reader,
And served as a compass in charting his course—
Lawyer, legislator and leader.

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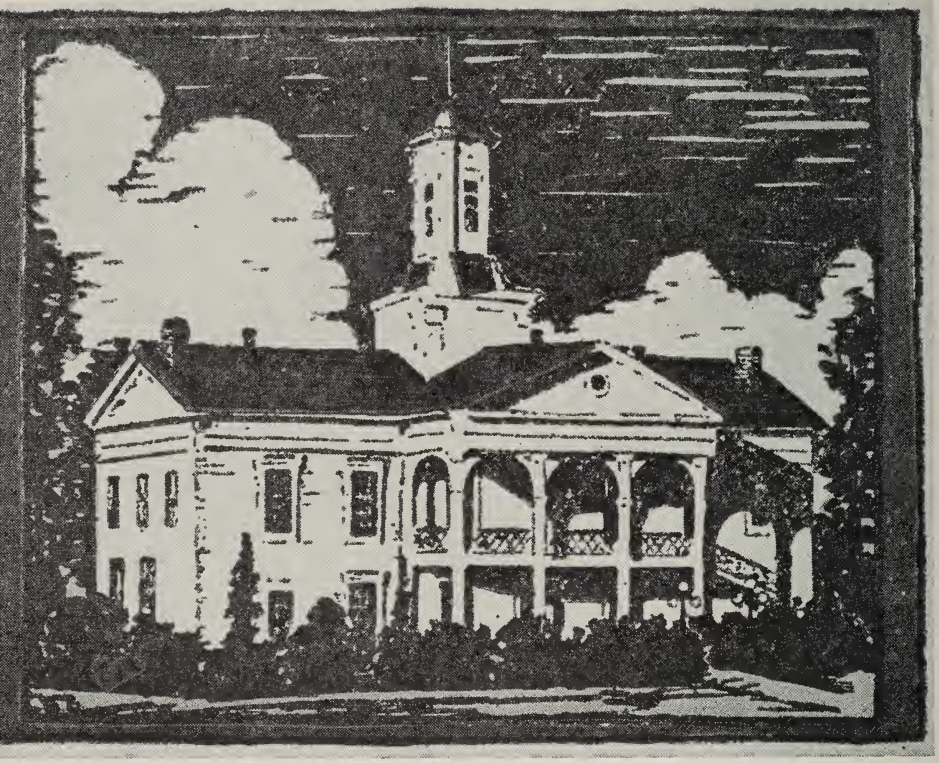
*Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England,* published in 1765, is still a classic and the foundation on which the whole structure of our common law is based.



Courtesy the Lincoln National Life Foundation

The Old State House at Vandalia, Illinois

Abe ran for the Legislature again.
    On this second try he won
Over George Forquer in a great campaign
    For their district in Sangamon.
At a joint mass meeting in an Illinois town
    They attacked each other with vim,
Forquer said, "This young man must be taken down"
    (Thought the task had devolved upon him).

Following the conclusion of his tirade,
    Lincoln got to his feet
And from the tremendous hit that he made
    All knew who'd win the seat.

He said, in part, on the house Forquer built
    He had mounted a lightning rod
"As protection for his political guilt
    Against an offended God."
To explain what he was getting at
    And the thing which irked him the most;
Forquer was a Whig who had turned Democrat
    To obtain a lucrative post.

Courtesy the Lincoln National Life Foundation

The State House at Springfield, Illinois

The nine legislators in 'thirty-six
    Were all Whigs from the Sangamon districts;
In feet each one stood well over six
    And proudly proclaimed these statistics.
Abe Lincoln, Dan Stone, and all of the rest
    Comprised a formidable line,
For they voted alike in each major contest
    And were commonly called "The Long Nine."

They spearheaded many popular movements,
    Presenting a solid phalanx;
High among these were internal improvements
    And the support of State banks.

They knew the power of give and take,
    The old "log-rolling" attack,
Sealing their deals with a friendly handshake
    And a genial slap on the back.
This unit vote was cast with finesse,
    Forcing opponents to yield;
July fourth, 'thirty-nine marked their crowning success,
    When the capitol was moved to Springfield.

Courtesy Chicago Historical Society

The Grave of Ann Rutledge at Oakland Cemetery Near Petersburg, Illinois

III

Abe's Courtships, Marriage and Family

Among tender tales of Abe's love affairs
  Ann Rutledge played a large part,
An auburn-haired beauty of twenty-two years
  Whose loveliness captured his heart.
Near her father's tavern you could hear the cascade
  And the creak of the water wheel;
Down by the millrace Abe met this fair maid
  Betrothed to one John McNeil.

He had come to New Salem seeking fortune and fame
  And was shifty, to say the least;
McNeil was an alias, as McNamar was his name,
  And he'd migrated there from the East.
On a trip to New York he forgot about Ann;
  The engagement she finally withdrew,
For she loved another, a poor, homely man,
  But one whom she knew to be true.

She contracted malaria that summer and died.*
  Abe found it hard to be brave;
Some said a week later he was espied
  Lying prostrate o'er her grave.

---

*Ann Rutledge died August 25, 1835, and was buried in the old Concord Cemetery about seven miles from New Salem. In 1890 her body was removed to the Oakland Cemetery near Petersburg, Illinois, with a fine monument marking her grave.

Courtesy Chicago Historical Society

Early View of the South Side of the Public Square at Springfield, Illinois

The romance with Miss Owens, Abe's other Mary,
Is one that's not so well known;
The facts are presented in this commentary,
Embellished by words of his own.
She was tall, dark-haired, one year older than he,
With a keen mind and kind face;
While visiting New Salem in thirty-three,
They met at her sister's place.

Throughout that summer Abe was impressed
By her deportment and carriage,
But three years later felt deeply distressed
To think he'd spoken of marriage;
When he saw her this time she'd gotten so fat,
"She appeared a fair match for Falstaff."
Honor-bound, he proposed, and she turned him down flat!
(One wonders who had the last laugh.)

He told Mrs. Browning that with girls he was done,*
Then added reflectively,
"I can never be satisfied with anyone
Who'd be blockhead enough to have me."

---

*Two years later, on April 1, 1838, Abe wrote a humorous letter to his friend, Mrs. O. H. Browning, in which he gave a detailed account of his affair with Mary Owens.

Courtesy the Library of Congress

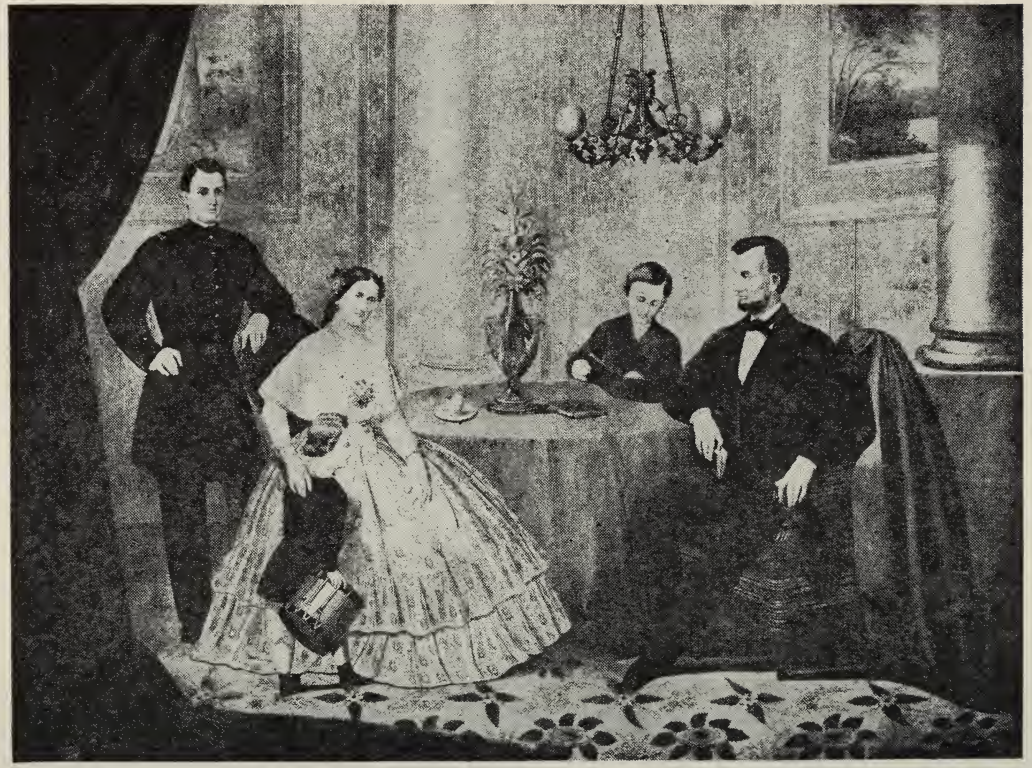
Mary Todd Lincoln

The girl whom Abe finally took as his bride
And who by his side did faithfully plod
Was that much-maligned woman unjustly decried,
The pretty and plump Mary Todd.

She came from Kentucky, a Lexington belle,
And made her home in Springfield
With a sister who hoped that she might marry well,*
Perhaps Browning, Douglas or Shield.
She was well educated and loved fancy clothes—
Satin slippers, hoop skirts and lace.
From the top of her head to the tips of her toes
She exemplified culture and grace.

After a stormy courtship which upset her life
And gave Abe cause for despair,
In the Edwards' parlor they were made man and wife
With close friends and kinfolk there.
From this rather strange union four children came,
Pride and joy of Mother and Dad—
Four cherished sons, each with a nickname:
Bobbie, Eddie, Willie and Tad.

*Mary's sister Elizabeth was married to N. W. Edwards, lawyer, politician and member of a prominent Illinois family.



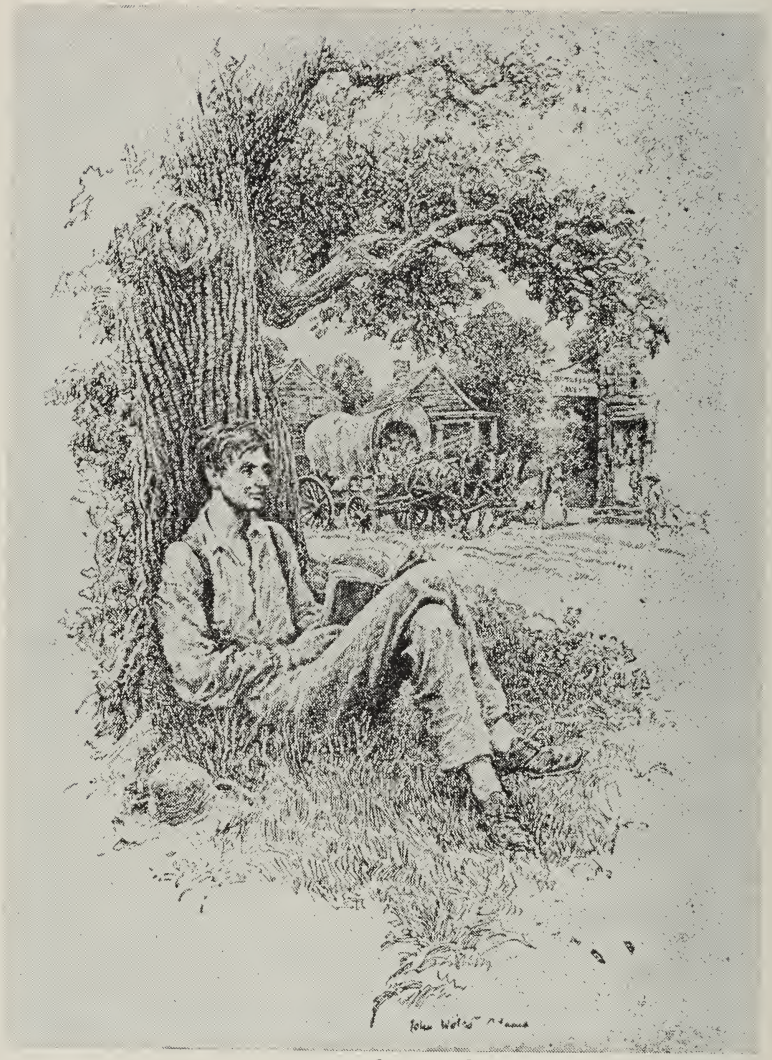
Courtesy the Library of Congress

President Lincoln and Family Circle

Robert was serious and yet full of fun,
    A Todd in many details;
While at Harvard, being the President's son,
    The fellows dubbed him "Prince of Rails."
He held government posts, received wide acclaim,
    Had a fine legal career,
Left none to continue the great family name
    And died in his eighty-third year.

Their second son, Eddie, lived only four years,
    A child most gentle and kind;
Though time healed the wound and dried up the tears,
    He was always on their mind.

Mary collapsed when Willie was taken;
    At the age of twelve he passed on;
He died in the White House, and she was so shaken
    That for months her composure was gone.
Tad died when he was eighteen years old
    From a virulent chest effusion,
And his widowed mother, whom he had consoled,
    Spent her last years in seclusion.



Courtesy the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Abe Studying Law

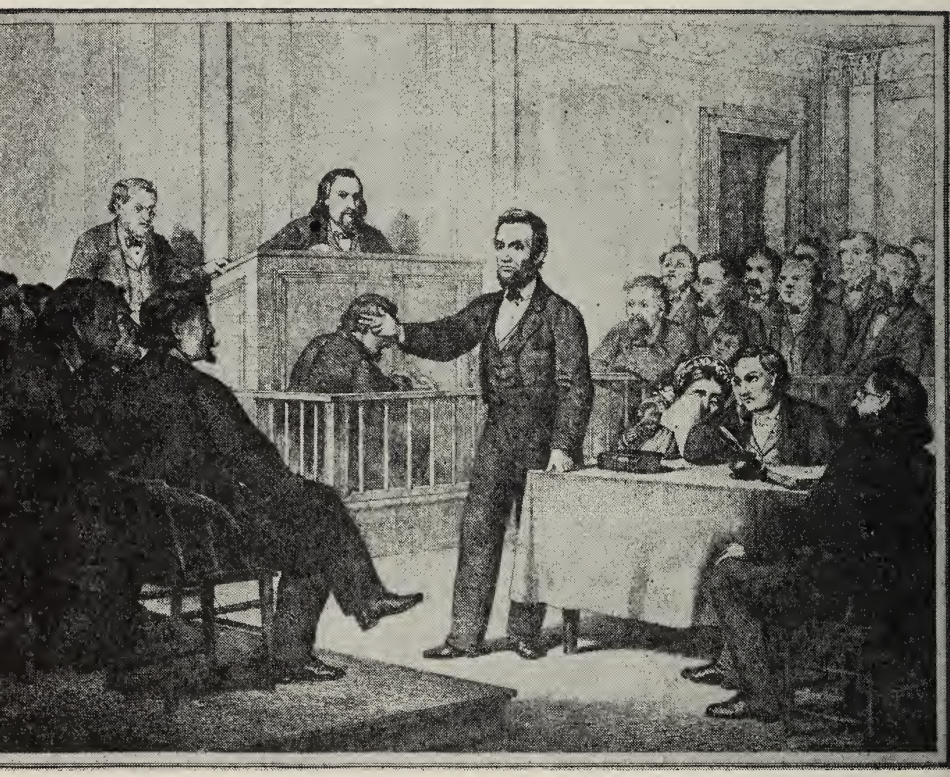
IV

Lincoln the Lawyer

For Lincoln, eighteen hundred and thirty-four
    Was a memorable year;
He was twenty-five as he opened the door
    Upon his new career.

At Vandalia that fall in the Legislature
    He learned parliamentary rules
And became conversant with nomenclature
    That wasn't taught in "blab" schools.
When the session closed, he visited court
    At Springfield, where Logan presided,
And where circuit lawyers of every sort
    Swapped yarns, argued and chided.

In court, Judge Logan was picturesque
    With his corncob pipe belching smoke,
His chair tilted back, feet on the desk
    And a Western drawl when he spoke.
Back at the store, Abe studied law
    When not engaged as clerk,
For during these months he clearly saw
    That this should be his life's work.



Courtesy the Library of Congress

Abraham Lincoln Defending Young Armstrong

Illinois' Eighth Circuit in 'thirty-six
    Welcomed young Abe to the bar.
In the practice of law, as in politics,
    He became a recognized star.
As a suit progressed, he'd seem to consort
    With those on the other side,
Then suddenly lay before the court
    Some fact that would turn the tide.

Duff Armstrong's trial was a typical case;
    He was charged with killing a man.
Abe agreed that he drank and had set a wild pace
    That didn't do much for his clan.

But when the state's witness swore on the stand
    That he'd seen Duff's lethal blow,
From an old almanac Lincoln held in his hand
    He proved that it couldn't be so;
It had been a new moon on that fateful night;
    At the distance alleged none could see
Just who had struck whom throughout the fight,
    And the jury set Armstrong free.

Courtesy International Harvester Company, Chicago

The World's First Reaper

"McCormick versus Manny" in a patent dispute
Had a significant ending.
The latter hired Abe to strengthen his suit,
Which then in Chicago was pending;
Litigation involving the mechanical reaper
Seemed set for a long legal journey,
And Manny decided his chances were greater
By having one local attorney.

For weeks Abe studied every phase of the case,
Collecting all kinds of reports,
Then the trial was transferred to another place,
To one of the Ohio courts;
Edwin M. Stanton was placed in command
As Manny's chief legal guide,
And when he saw Lincoln, he threw up his hand,
Waving him off to one side.

The years elapse. . . . On the same side they stand,
But unlike those days of yore,
President Lincoln is now in command,
With Stanton his Secretary of War.

Courtesy Chicago Historical Society

The Lincoln-Herndon Law Office at Springfield, Illinois

Abe practiced twenty-four consecutive years
Save for one congressional term;
Stuart, Logan and Herndon each shared their careers
With him for a time as a firm.

For his first two partners he had high esteem,
But Billy he loved as a son;
Sixteen great years they worked as a team,
'Til Abe went to Washington.
"Lincoln & Herndon" was a familiar shingle
On the west side of the Square;
The meek and the mighty together would mingle,
Obtaining wise counsel there.

Their practice was varied, both corporate and plain,
But whether the fee great or small,
They divided their income exactly in twain
With no bookkeeping at all.
The office itself was a sight to behold,
With papers all scattered around;
The couch, desk and chairs were battered and old,
But the judgments expressed there were sound.

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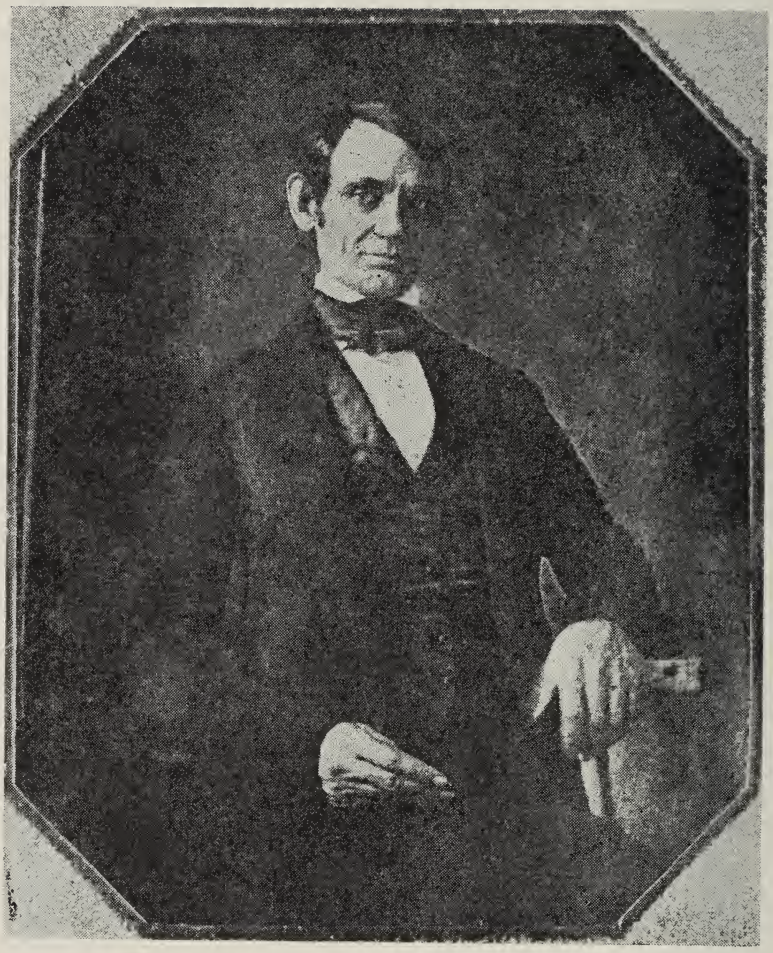


Courtesy the Library of Congress

Abraham Lincoln in 1846

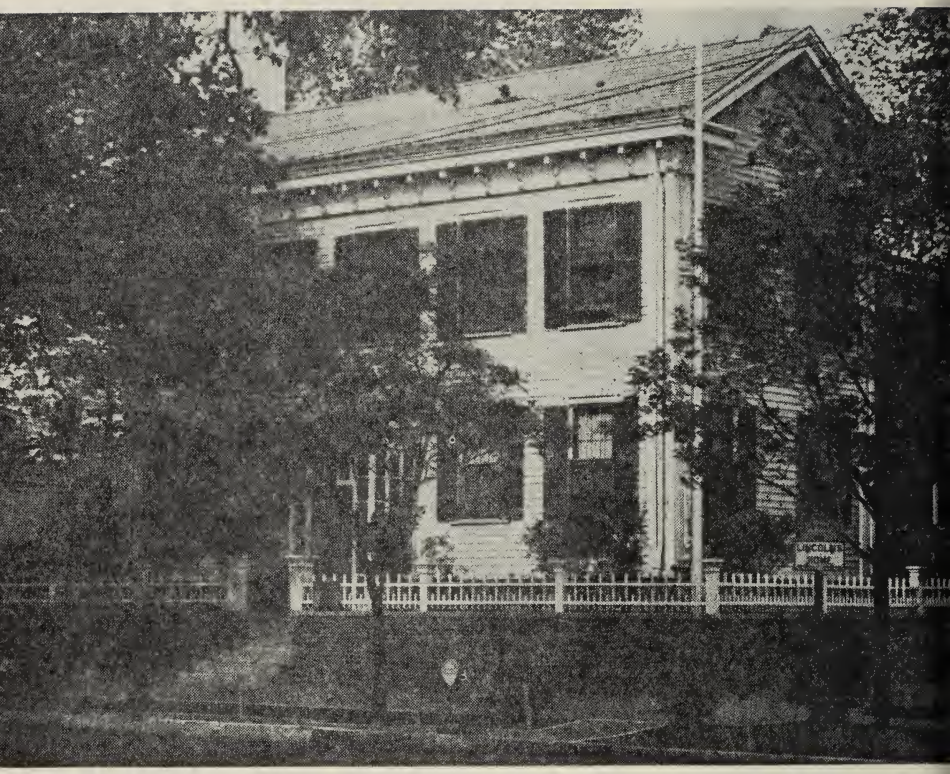
V

Abe in National Politics

Abe gained the national limelight
    In eighteen forty-seven,
Having defeated the Reverend Mr. Cartwright;
    Which made their tally even.
He was Congressman Lincoln now,
    "The Gentleman from Illinois,"
That lad who once had followed the plow
    And who armies some day would deploy.

In the House his seat was center rear,
    On the Whig side of the aisle;
Alexander H. Stephens from Georgia sat near,
    The Confederate V.P. after while.
There was abolitionist Giddings, states' rightist Rhett,
    Andrew Johnson, David Wilmot—
Men who hadn't meant very much to him yet
    But destined to mean a lot.

This thirtieth Congress had a war to conclude,
    Raging south of the Rio Grande,
And the perennial problem of servitude.
    Against both, Abe took a firm stand.



Courtesy the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Lincoln's Home at Springfield, Illinois

When the Congress adjourned in 'forty-nine,
Lincoln came home to Springfield
With thoughts of the Land Office job on his mind,
But it fell to J. Butterfield.

He ran for the Senate in 'fifty-four
And went down in defeat,
Lacking four votes of a winning score;*
Lyman Trumbull gained the seat.
He bowed out for Vice-President in 'fifty-six
In favor of William L. Dayton;
It seemed that his future in politics
Rivaled a snowball's with Satan.

Still, he was not one to bemoan his fate,
Laughing it off with a quip,
He said, when topped by Douglas in 'fifty-eight,
"It wasn't a fall, just a slip."
Despite reverses throughout the decade,
In 'sixty he finally came through,
Which shows once again "in the passing parade"
What faith in one's self can do.

---

*U. S. Senators were then elected by state legislatures, hence the closeness of the vote at the State House in Springfield. With the adoption of the Seventeenth Amendment in 1913, this procedure was changed.

Courtesy the Lincoln National Life Foundation

One of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, 1858

Seven Illinois towns since 'fifty-eight
    Have gone down in history
As the scene of a Lincoln-Douglas debate
    On popular sovereignty.
These two campaigners were witty and wise,
    And thousands of people came,
Sitting or standing beneath open skies
    For three hours to hear them declaim.

"Let the voters decide in the new territory
    If they would have slavery or not."
This was the crux of the Douglas story;
    To him it didn't matter a lot.
Lincoln went back to the Constitution
    Where "all men are created equal."
All men except slaves made that institution
    An unintended sequel.

The debates were heralded far and wide,
    Reaching the New York press
And started a presidential tide
    For "Old Abe from the wilderness."

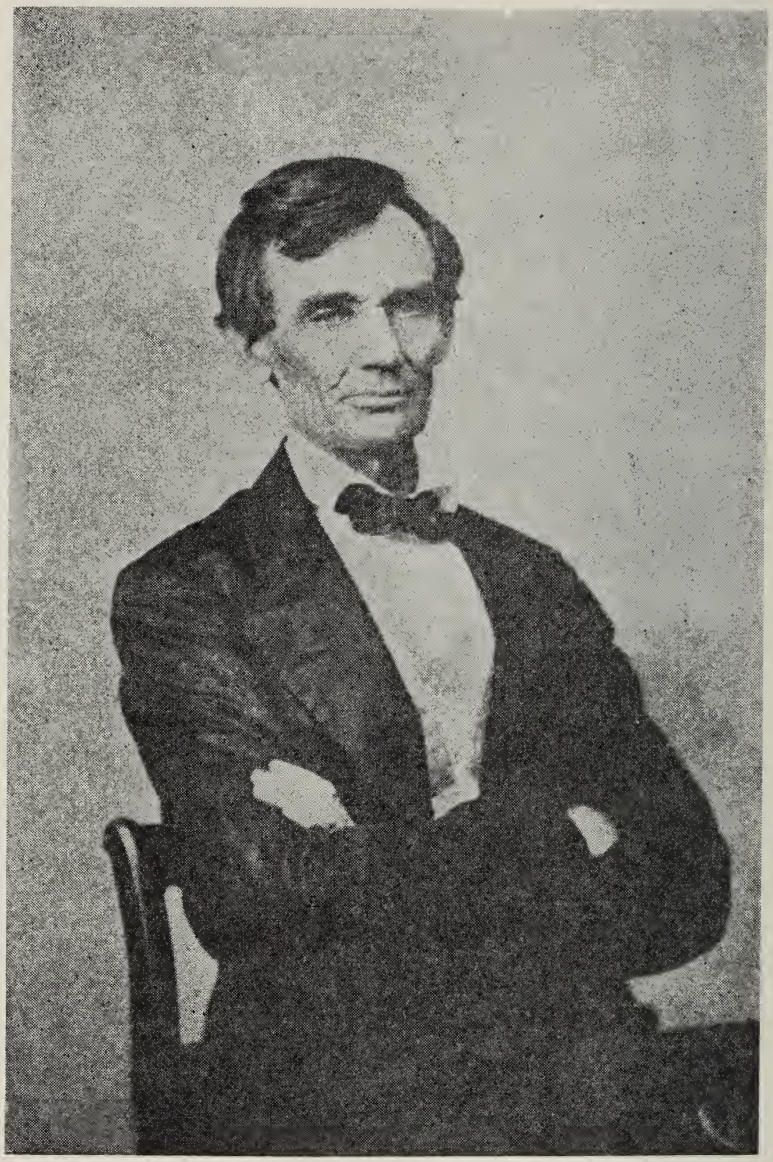
Courtesy Chicago Historical Society

The Bible-House, Cooper Institute in New York City

A prominent Brooklyn preacher,
    Keen for all forms of research,
The dynamic Henry Ward Beecher
    Asked Abe to speak in his church.

He had lectured several times before
    On "Discovery and Invention,"
But now with the threat of civil war
    Grave issues claimed his attention.
Since he wished to discuss the nation's plight,
    It was thought by those in charge
Cooper Institute was a better site,
    Being both central and large.

Fifteen hundred people were there,
    Men with political power.
All knew, when they heard this midwesterner;
    He was the man of the hour.
"Let us have faith that right makes might . . ."
    The voice was soft and entreating;
The new broadcloth suit didn't seem to hang right,
    But history was made at that meeting.



Courtesy the Library of Congress

Abraham Lincoln in 1860

Throughout 'fifty-nine in the northern states
    Lincoln's popularity grew,
And in 'sixty he was one of four candidates
    With the Presidency in view.

On October fifteenth, little Grace Bedell,
    From Westfield, New York, wrote a note
To him in which she went on to tell
    How a beard would increase his vote:
Since "all the ladies like whiskers," she knew
    This would help him to win;
"They would tease their husbands to vote for you"—
    A right enjoyed only by men.

In replying to her communication,
    He posed this question to Grace;
Might people call it "a piece of silly affectation"
    Since he'd always had a smooth face?
Despite some misgiving, he took her advice,
    And within a month or so,
He had a beard that was bound to entice,
    Allowing all but his mustache to grow.

Courtesy the Lincoln National Life Foundation

The White House in Washington, D.C., in 1861

The election was over; Abe Lincoln had won,
At Springfield he bade friends good-bye;
As he left that day for his place in the sun,
The crowd scarcely had a dry eye.
He spoke of his difficult mission
And hoped the Union might yet survive,
But he harbored a grave premonition
That he'd never return alive.

His train wound its way through the eastern states,
Stopping at five capital cities;
The stations were crowded with political greats,
Office seekers and reception committees.

At Harrisburg he was told of a plot
Turned up by the Pinkerton corps
Wherein plans had been made for him to be shot
While passing through Baltimore.
In disguise, with two guards, he entrained at night.
On arrival this message was flashed:*
"Plums arrived here with nuts this morning all right";
The assassins' hopes had been dashed.

---

*The news of President-elect Lincoln's safe arrival into Washington, D.C., was sent in the form of a code telegram by Allen Pinkerton to Governor Curtin at Harrisburg.

Courtesy the Library of Congress

Lincoln's First Inauguration, 1861

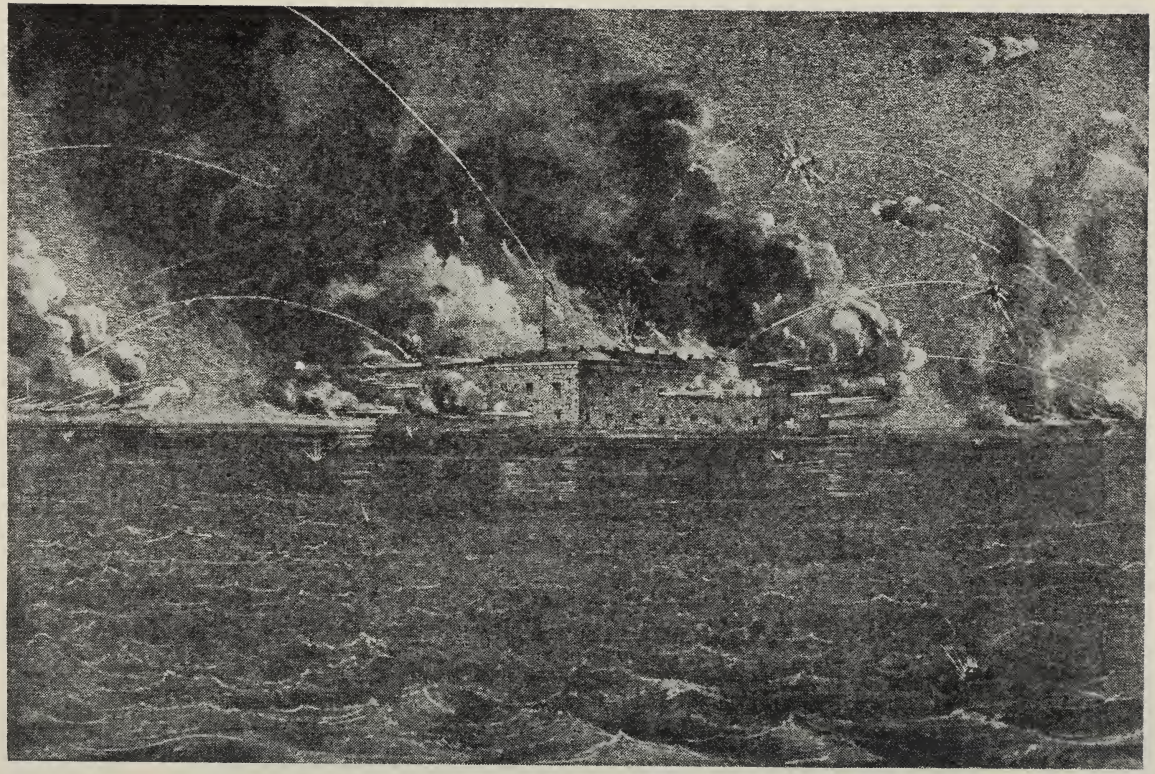
VI

A. Lincoln, President

Monday, March fourth in 'sixty-one,
    Dawned cloudy and overcast,
But the skies soon cleared over Washington,
    And by noon the storm clouds had passed.
At the Capitol grounds a large crowd has assembled
    On this, Abe's Inaugural Day;
Emotions were mixed, some smiled, others trembled,
    Waiting to hear what he'd say.

Seven southern states had seceded,
    And others might soon follow suit;
Prompt and prudent action was needed,
    What measures would he institute?

He spoke words of conciliation,
    Harsh ones never flowed from his mouth;
He sought time for deliberation,
    Hoping to placate the South.
His role was not that of oppressor,
    He had no reprisals in view;
He said, "If war comes, you yourself must be the aggressor.
    The Government will not assail you."



Courtesy the Library of Congress

Bombardment of Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, April 12–13, 1861
(A print issued by Currier and Ives)

The Union continued to wrench apart,
"Secesh"—a new word—had been coined;
The Confederacy had made a strong start,
And four more states soon joined.

From Charleston harbor there'd come a report
That Sumter was low on supplies;
Food and powder were needed to hold the Fort
Located beneath hostile skies.
President Buchanan had passed the buck
To the new Administration;
The Fort had become a sitting duck
In its weakened situation.

What should President Lincoln do?
Sending aid might provoke an attack;
The *Star of the West* had tried to get through,
But gunfire had turned her back.
The answer came from the Rebel Commander:
On April twelfth at dawn,
A cannonball crashed against Fort Sumter*
And "The Great Rebellion" was on.

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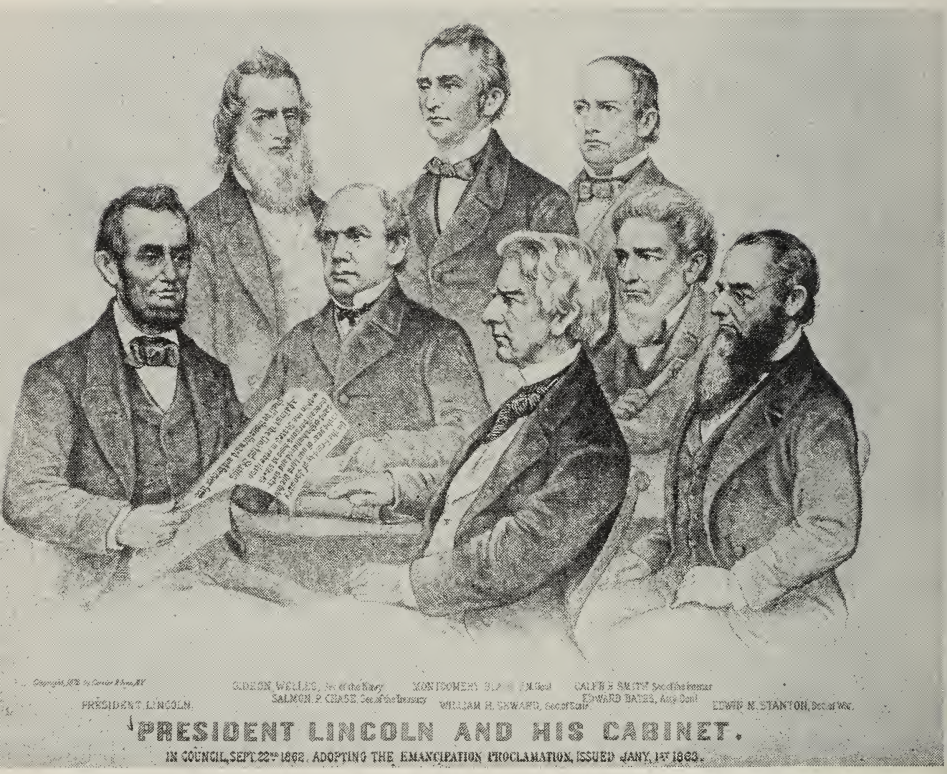
*Two days later Major Anderson surrendered the Fort and marchd out with his weary band of gallant men under a flag of truce.



Courtesy the Library of Congress

President Lincoln and His Cabinet in Counsel, September 22, 1862, Adopting the Emancipation Proclamation
(A print issued by Currier and Ives)

The first major battle was fought at Bull Run,
And by four o'clock that day
The Federals were streaming toward Washington,
Pursued by men of the Gray;
In wild confusion the Army fell back
To a capital undefended
And had the Rebels pressed their attack,
That budding war might have ended.

Success was denied the northern side
'Til the autumn of sixty-two;
At Antietam Creek they turned the tide
And the action favored the Blue.

This win bolstered Abe's determination,
And he thought it time to proclaim
The Emancipation Proclamation
Synonymous with his name.
On January first, eighteen sixty-three,
To our fair land he gave
"The assurance of freedom to the free"
By liberating the slave.

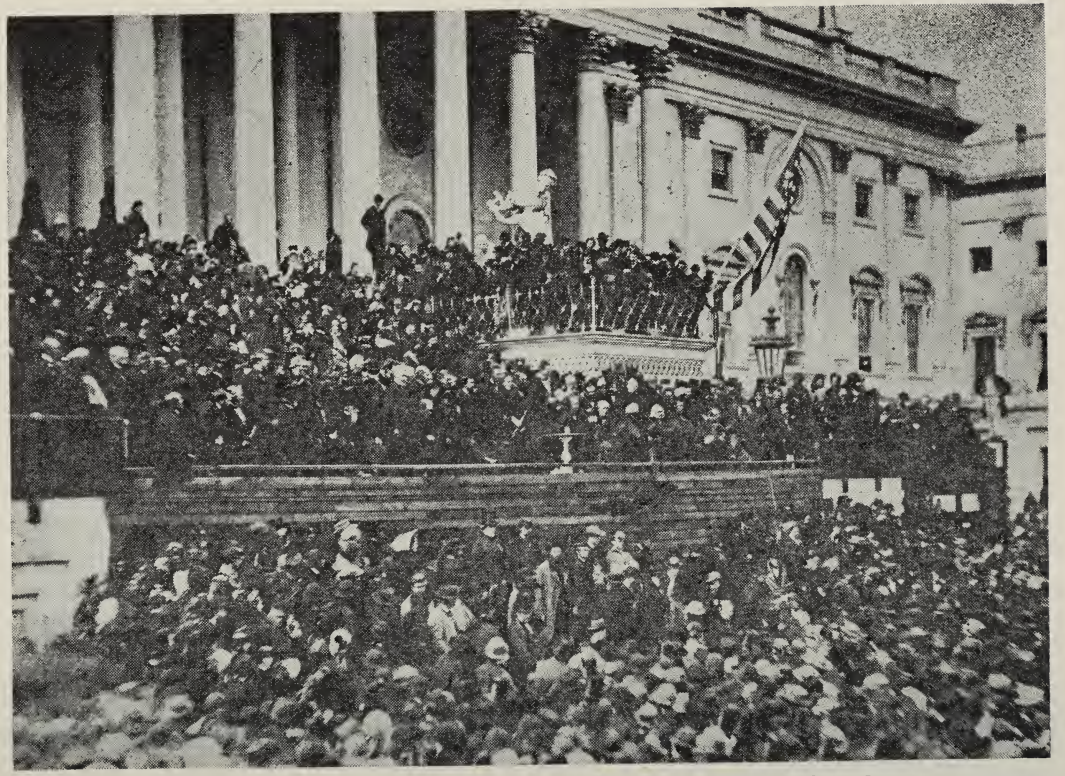
Courtesy the Library of Congress

Lincoln Delivering the Gettysburg Address, November 19, 1863

The decisive battle of Gettysburg
In July of 'sixty-three
And simultaneous fall of Vicksburg
Stunned the Confederacy.

On ground hallowed and consecrated
By men who'd given their all,
A cemetery was dedicated
At Gettysburg that fall.
The principal speaker was Edward Everett
Who gave a two-hour oration;
An eloquent statesman and popular favorite,
He received a great ovation.

Abe had consented to attend the affair
On that November day
And say a few words in eulogy there,
Where slept both the Blue and the Gray.
There was feeble applause for his "little address";
Sitting down, he looked sad and careworn,
But his three-minute speech will continue to bless
Generations yet unborn.



Courtesy the Library of Congress

Lincoln's Second Inauguration, March 4, 1865

The war lingered on for twenty-one months
With casualties hard to believe;
Thousands died on both sides at the various fronts
In scenes difficult to conceive.
With the fall of Savannah the South was bisected
At the close of 'sixty-four.
President Lincoln had been re-elected
To serve for four years more.
At Petersburg, Lee was continually pounded
By Grant who blocked his retreat;
The C.S.A.'s death knell was soon to be sounded,*
With attrition underlying defeat.
On the fourth of March Abe renewed his vows
At his Second Inauguration;
What type of terms would he espouse
To reunite the nation?
"With malice toward none, with charity for all"
And a prayer that the war would cease
That day he issued a clarion call
For "a just and lasting peace."

*C.S.A. = Confederate States of America.

Courtesy the Library of Congress

Scene at Appomattox Courthouse, Where General Lee Surrendered to General Grant on April 9, 1865

VII

Abraham Lincoln Gains Peace

The fourteenth of April was a beautiful day,
  Spring was in the air;
Washington City was festive and gay
  With bunting everywhere.
Lee had surrendered five days before,
  Peace had come at last;
The awful ordeal of civil war
  For America had passed.

Abe and Mary went for a ride
  A little after five,
His cheerfulness caused her to shudder inside,*
  But they had a pleasant drive.
Conversation ranged from reconstruction to charm;
  Where they'd live when they left Washington;
He spoke of buying a prairie farm
  Along the banks of the Sangamon.

Our American Cousin, a humorous show
  Was playing at Ford's that night.
Since the patrons had read that the Lincolns would go,
  Disappointing them didn't seem right.

---

*The last time Mary had seen her husband in such high spirits was just before Willie was taken fatally ill, and she was fearful lest this might be a bad omen.

Courtesy the Library of Congress

Abraham Lincoln's Tomb at Springfield, Illinois, in 1865

They reached the theatre at twenty-five after eight,
    Picking up two guests on their way;
Last-minute details had caused Abe to be late,
    Hence they missed the first part of the play.

During the third act, at ten seventeen,
    A pistol shot rent the air,
A man leaped from their box, Mary screamed,
    And the President slumped in his chair.
Unconscious, men carried him out of that place
    To a house across the street;
A deadly pallor was on his face
    But the great heart continued to beat.

Nine hours later the vigil ended,
    From far above the Capitol's dome
For him the Angel of Death descended
    And lovingly beckoned him Home.
No finer tribute could ever be given
    To one of the world's great sages
Than that expressed by Secretary Stanton:
    "Now he belongs to the ages."

PART TWO

Lincoln Addresses and Letters

I

The House Divided Speech

Abraham Lincoln's "House Divided" speech was delivered at Springfield, Illinois on June 17, 1858, before the Republican State Convention which nominated him for U. S. Senate.

If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do and how to do it. We are now far into the fifth year since a policy was initiated with the avowed object and confident promise of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy that agitation has not only not ceased, but has constantly augmented.

In my opinion, it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed.

"A house divided against itself cannot stand." I believe this government cannot endure permanently half-slave and half-free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved; I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other.

Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the states—old as well as new, North as well as South.

Our cause, then, must be intrusted to and conducted by its own undoubted friends—those whose hands are free, whose hearts are in the work—who do care for the result. The result is not doubtful. We shall not fail—if we stand firm, we shall not fail. Wise counsels may accelerate, or mistakes delay it, but sooner or later the victory is sure to come.

II

The Cooper Union Speech

Lincoln's speech at Cooper Union Institute in New York City was delivered February 27, 1860.

I DEFY anyone to show that any living man in the whole world ever did, prior to the beginning of the present century (and I might almost say prior to the beginning of the last half of the present century), declare that, in his understanding, any proper division of local from Federal authority, or any part of the Constitution, forbade the Federal government to control as to slavery in the Federal territories.

To those who now so declare, I give, not only "our fathers who framed the government under which we live," but with them all other living men within the century in which it was framed, among whom to search, and they shall not be able to find the evidence of a single man agreeing with them.

I do not mean to say we are bound to follow implicitly in whatever our fathers did. To do so would be to discard all the lights of current experience, to reject all progress, all improvement. What I do say is that if we could supplant the opinions and policy of our fathers in any case, we should do so upon evidence so conclusive, and argument so clear, that even their authority, fairly considered and weighed, cannot stand; and most surely not in a case whereof we ourselves declare they understood the question better than we.

Let all who believe that "our fathers who framed the government under which we live" understood this question just as well and even better than we do now, speak as they spoke, and act as they acted upon it.

It is exceedingly desirable that all parts of this great confederacy shall be at peace and harmony one with another. Let us

Republicans do our part to have it so. Even though much provoked, let us do nothing through passion and ill temper.

Even though the southern people will not do so much as listen to us, let us calmly consider their demands, and yield to them, if in our deliberate view of our duty we possibly can. Judge by all they say and do, and by the subject and nature of their controversy with us, let us determine, if we can, what will satisfy them.

Wrong as we think slavery is, we can yet afford to let it alone where it is, because that much is due to the necessity arising from its actual presence in the nation. But can we, while our votes will prevent it, allow it to spread into the national territories, and to overrun us here in these free states?

If our sense of duty forbids this, then let us stand by our duty, fearlessly and effectively. Let us be diverted by none of those sophistical contrivances wherewith we are so industriously plied and belabored—contrivances such as groping for some middle ground between the right and the wrong, vain as the search for a man who should be neither a living man nor a dead man; such as a policy of "don't care" on a question about which all true men do care; such as Union appeals beseeching true Union men to yield to disunionists, reversing the divine rule, and calling, not the sinners, but the righteous to repentance; such as invocations to Washington imploring men to unsay what Washington said, and to undo what Washington did.

Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it.

III

Letter to Grace Bedell Billings

Springfield, Ill.
Oct. 19, 1860.

Miss Grace Bedell.

My Dear Little Miss:

Your very agreeable letter of the fifteenth is received. I regret the necessity of saying I have no daughter. I have three sons; one seventeen, one nine and one seven years of age. They, with their mother, constitute my whole family. As to the whiskers, having never worn any, do you not think people would call it a piece of silly affectation if I should begin it now?

Your very sincere well-wisher,
A. Lincoln.

IV

Farewell at Springfield

Lincoln delivered his farewell address at the Springfield, Illinois, railway station when leaving for Washington, D.C., on February 11, 1861.

My Friends:

No one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance, I cannot fail. Trusting in Him who can go with me, and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.

V

The Gettysburg Address

Lincoln spoke at the dedication of a military cemetery at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on November 19, 1863.

FOUR score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under GOD, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

VI

Letter to Mrs. Lydia A. Bixby

Executive Mansion
Washington, D.C.
November 21, 1864

Dear Madam:

I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming, but I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic that they died to save. I pray that the Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours very sincerely and respectfully,
Abraham Lincoln.

VII

The Second Inaugural Address

Lincoln delivered his Second Inaugural Address at the Capitol in Washington, D.C., on March 4, 1865.

Fellow Countrymen:

At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at first. Then a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued seemed very fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented.

The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself, and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hopes for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it, all sought to avoid it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it with war—seeking to dissolve the Union and divide the effects by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would accept war rather than let it perish, and the war came. One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and interest was the object

for which the insurgents would rend the Union by war, while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it.

Neither part expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease when, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph and a result less fundamental and astounding.

Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayer of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. Woe unto the world because of offences, for it must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh. If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern there any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly de we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the leash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, that the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and orphans, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.